



UPLIFT Newsletter

The United
Presbyterian Church
of Blairsville, PA

JANUARY 2021

I never have been much of a partier. New Year's Eve with a few friends is about as wild as my life gets. This year it was just Bobbi and me. The scenes on television were surreal—Time Square virtually empty, pre-taped musical numbers done by groups we never heard of, distanced barricaded corrals reserved for small gatherings of medical workers (no more than 6). We didn't pay much attention until the countdown. The east coast united in the chorus, "ten, nine...six, five...two, one." The ball concluded its descent, we welcomed the new year with a kiss, and within minutes our eyes closed with the hope that when we woke all the problems that plagued us would have disappeared. If only order and peace were just a matter of timing.

The ancients had a view of time much different than our modern way of understanding. The Bible uses two words that reflect the difference. One word for time is "chronos." If you put things in chronological order, they're placed from oldest to newest. Events are identified by day and year. "January" gets its name from Janus, the Roman god of doorways and gateways. He is depicted with two faces, one looking backward, the other forward. A new year means moving from an old calendar to a new one. That's the way society orders its thoughts and lives.

But there is another way of thinking about time. The Bible calls it "Kairos," it's a way of understanding time as opportunity to make and experience a difference through God's activity in our lives. It cannot be tracked on a calendar, scheduled to our convenience. It's God's timing as he enters our circumstance, meeting us where we are and supplying us with what we need most. It's not the watch on our wrist, it's the watching in our heart. It's not the pre-appointed meeting scheduled, it's the surprise of joy as we discover God's presence and grace.

The Preacher in Ecclesiastes writes, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven, a time to be born/die, plant/pluck up, weep/laugh, mourn/dance..." fourteen pairs of images of the extremes of our lives, twenty-eight circumstances reflecting the times of our lives in which God is at work within us, remolding, fashioning us into someone new and stronger because we have come to know him in a more intimate way.

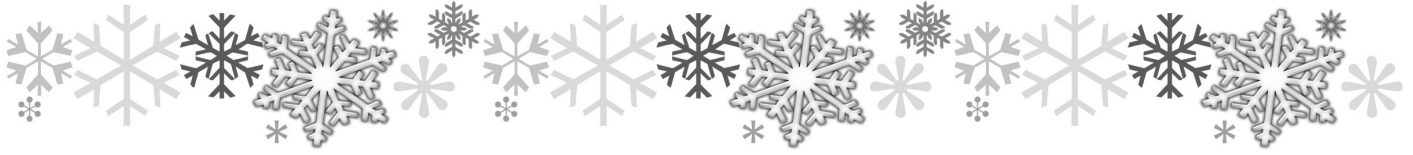
The struggles of 2020 did not end as the ball dropped in Times Square. The battles we face are not confined to the page of a calendar. This world may console itself by saying, "its just a matter of time, we'll wait it out." But as a people of faith we know that our days, our lives, are in God's hands. He sets us free and liberates us to greet the new day, yet even when we feel imprisoned, he is with us giving us what we need to endure and persevere. As painful as some days may be, as senseless as some circumstances seem, I subscribe to the words of Romans 8:28, "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." That does not excuse the evil our sin perpetuates, but it does assure us that even in the midst of the world's sinfulness, God is still in control. I have seen in my own life how God has used painful experiences to give me a new perspective. I have known God to take what I think to be a terrible ending and transform it to a marvelous beginning. Many of you have followed the story of a woman from our church family who has faced the reality that COVID may end her life and each day she has become more sensitive to the tender touch of God's healing mercy. Her witness brings glory to the God of her birth and rebirth. Paul writes, "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold the new has come" (II Cor. 5:17).

This new chronological year is welcomed and we can't imagine it being more difficult than the one we left behind. But even if it turns out to be more challenging, we need not fear because our times are in God's hand. As the prophet Isaiah reminds us, "God's ways are higher than our ways and God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts" (55:8). Don't measure your life by days and hours. Measure your life by the seasons through which you venture with Jesus Christ. Paul bears witness to the power of faith as he declares, "I have learned to be content...I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

Open your heart to that new thing God seeks to do in you.....

In Christ's love,

Pastor Jim



Scripture Texts for Worship

The scripture texts for January are given for your study in preparation for Worship.

Sunday, January 3

Jeremiah 31:7-14
Ephesians 1:3-14

Sunday, January 10

Genesis 1:1-5
Mark 1:4-11

Sunday, January 17

John 1:43-51
I Corinthians 6:12-20

Saturday, January 24

Mark 1:14-20
I Corinthians 7:29-31

Saturday, January 31

Deuteronomy 18:15-20
Mark 1:21-28

Sunday, February 7

Isaiah 40:21-31
Mark 1:29-39

February Newsletter

Articles to be published in the February edition of the UP-LIFT newsletter are due to the church office by Friday, January 15th. Please call the office with any questions or concerns.

Offering Envelopes

2021 Offering Envelopes are available for pick-up in the back of the sanctuary. If you would like a box of envelopes or would like your box mailed, please contact the church office.

Worship Assistants

January 3

Liturgist: Jean Heberling
Streaming: Mark Borbonus
Proj/Audio: Dennis Gould

January 10—Communion

Liturgist: Mary Anzelone
Streaming: Olivia Eckenroad
Proj/Audio: Kristi Eckenroad & Dennis Gould

January 17

Liturgist: Lon Ferguson
Flowers: Cindy Borbonus
Streaming: Chase Stuchal
Proj/Audio: Andrew Baker/Cole Stuchal

January 24

Liturgist: Barb Brown
Streaming: Mark Borbonus
Proj/Audio: Eli & Brylea Borbonus

January 31

Liturgist: tba
Streaming: John Bruner
Proj/Audio: Elizabeth & Abigail Bruner

Offering Counters

Pat & Janeen Swope

2021 Communion Dates

January 10—Baptism of Our Lord

*February 17—Ash Wednesday

March 14—Lent

*April 1—Maundy Thursday

May 23—Pentecost

August 15

September 12

October 3—World Wide Communion

November 21—Christ the King Sunday

*December 24—Christmas Eve

(* evening services)

2021 Per Capita Update

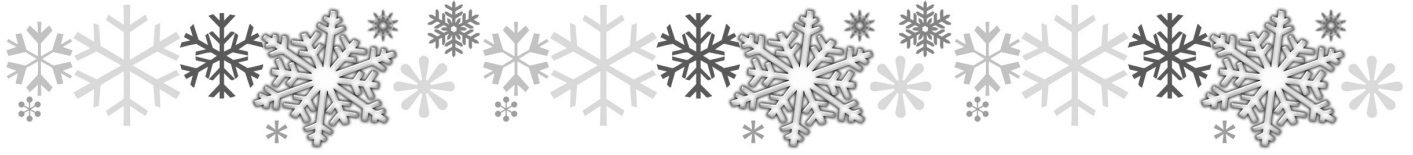
Per Capita, literally “per head”, is the amount requested from each member to cover the administrative expenses of the General Assembly, Synod and Presbytery. For 2021, that amount is \$33.65 per member on the active roll. That breaks down to: General Assembly—\$8.98, Synod—\$2.40, and Presbytery—22.27. The Session has taken action to withhold all per capita to General Assembly with the exception of contributions given with specific designation to it. Per Capita sent to support Synod and Presbytery is NOT used to support the General Assembly. For this reason, the session sees that those funds are paid unless you request that your share not be. A letter explaining your options with regards to your per capita was included in your offering envelopes and is included in this newsletter. If you have questions, please contact the church office or see Pastor Monroe. We want to honor your intentions for your gifts to the work of the church.

Chancel Choir

The Chancel Choir gathers for rehearsal each Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. Safety measures are followed while meeting. If you are interested in joining the choir or if you have questions, please contact Cindy Borbonus. We also invite those who would like to share their musical gifts during worship to contact Cindy for more information.

We will celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion Sunday, January 10th during the 11:00 a.m. worship service.

Please take time to prepare to receive and share the sacrament.



Year End Giving Statements

Financial statements of your giving will be mailed to each household mid to late January. If you would like your statement earlier, contact the church office.

Year End Reports

Committee chairs and treasurers are asked to submit a report to include in the annual report for the Congregational Meeting. Please have your report to the church office by Sunday, January 24th. If you have any questions or need information from the office, contact Jill during office hours.

2021 Flower Chart

The 2021 Flower Chart is hanging in the hallway outside the church office. If you would like to order flowers for Sunday worship, please use the chart to sign-up for your choice of date. Flowers are \$20/Sunday and checks can be made payable to the Board of Deacons. We hope that those ordering flowers through the deacons would take the arrangement following worship or pick them up at the church by the following Tuesday. Flowers that remain at the church after Tuesday will be shared with homebound members of the congregation. Please contact the church office with any questions or concerns.

Annual Congregational Meeting

The 2020 year in review Congregational Meeting will be held Sunday, January 31st. The meeting will be held following worship in the sanctuary and will be live streamed for those watching at home. Two phones will be available if those at home have a question or would like to make a comment. If you have any questions concerning the plans for the meeting, please call the church office.

To the Session and Congregation,
We thank you for your thoughtfulness to us this Christmas and throughout the year. It is a blessing for us to be able to minister to our church family especially in a year like 2020. We look forward to a blessed and happy New Year in 2021!

Marilyn, Cindy, Sandy, Jill and Peg

Bible Study

Wednesday morning Bible Study meets at 10:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. We ask that masks be worn throughout our time together, if possible. Please respect the space of others when choosing your seat. Pastor Monroe uses the sound system so as to be heard clearly. For those who would like to participate from home, we are set up to offer Bible Study via Zoom. If you are interested, please call the church office for more details.

Souper Bowl of Caring Offering

Since 1990, young people have been leading the charge and inspiring others to collect dollars and food around the time of the Super Bowl Game. The money and food collected then is given, 100%, to a local charity. More than \$110 million has been collected, changing the nation's largest weekend of football into the largest weekend of caring. We will receive our Souper Bowl of Caring Offering Sunday, February 7th during morning worship. One hundred percent of these gifts will be sent to ICCAP in support of the Food Bank.

Our Elders and Deacons

We thank Dennis Gould for his faithful service on the Session. He has been instrumental in helping to set a vision as we move forward.

We rejoice as Lon Ferguson, Joan Moran, Jeff Lewis and Pat Swope begin their ministry as the Sessional Class of 2023.

We thank Andrea Clayton and Mary Hileman for their faithful service as deacons. We rejoice as Bobbi Monroe, Steve Moran, Janet Smith and Judy Trimble begin their ministry as the Diaconal Class of 2023.

Property & Maintenance Concerns

If you notice something around the church property that needs repaired, please refer the matter to the church office. The secretary will forward the concern to the chair of the Property Committee. Please be very specific as to what the problem is, so that the issue can be handled. Thank you.

Nominating Committee

The work of the Nominating Committee is some of the most important in the life of the church. Those serving have the responsibility to bring before the congregation the names of members who will potentially serve as elders and deacons. Members of this committee should have:

- * An understanding of the nature, ministry and mission of the church
- * An awareness of the spiritual nature of the offices of elder and deacon
- * A knowledge of the impending challenges before the church
- * A familiarity with the members of the congregation and the potential gifts and abilities they bring to service
- * A spirit of prayer as they approach this work

If you, or someone you know would do well at the discernment of nominations, and would like to be considered for service on this committee, please write the name and place it in the offering plate or drop it off to the church office by January 17th.

Update from our Deacons

It has been an ongoing mission of our Deacons to support local organizations with financial gifts throughout the year. In 2020, the following gifts were given:

Alice Paul House.....	\$500
\$20 & \$25 Sheetz gift cards	
American Red Cross of IN Co.....	\$250
Coats-for-Kids Drive (UPC)	\$150
Evergreen after School Program	\$150
Family Promise of IN Co.	\$500
Pathway Shelter-ICCAP	\$800
Blairsville Power Pack Program-ICCAP ...	\$1000
Love & Light Ministry	\$150
Salvation Army Blairsville Unit	\$300
Torrance State Hospital-Forensic Unit	\$200
Torrance St. Hosp.-Indigent Patient Fund	\$200
Young Life of IN Co.	\$150
Total	\$4350

The Session

Class of 2021

Mary Anzelone
Doug Clayton
Bob Cosharek
Kim McKinney

Class of 2022

Gene Artman
Lisa Hainaut
Bruce Highberger
Rick Shoemaker

Class of 2023

Jeff Lewis
Lon Ferguson
Joan Moran
Pat Swope

Board of Deacons

Class of 2021

Erica Ash
Susie Cotti
Jean Heberling
Marilyn Neal

Class of 2022

Elizabeth Bruner
Jamie McKinney
Vicky Doty
Vicky Westley

Class of 2023

Bobbi Monroe
Steve Moran
Janet Smith
Judy Trimble

Please encourage the leaders of our church through your thoughts and prayers in the New Year.

Consider Taking Part

The Session Committees for 2021 are looking for interested members to be active participants. Chairs for the committees will be determined at the January Session meeting. Please review the committees and responsibilities of the committees and consider serving.

Worship – Worship services, sacraments, music, funerals, weddings

Mission – Benevolences, special offerings, global & local mission and missionaries

Christian Education – Sunday school programs, curriculum, adult education, youth work, leadership education

Finance – Finances, special funds, and annual budget

Stewardship – Stewardship education and programs, challenges the congregation in its faithful use of the many different resources entrusted to our care

Property & Maintenance – Construction, maintenance, repairs, housekeeping, safety, security, yard work, inventory

Congregational Fellowship – Suppers, Dinner Theater, picnics, outings, trips, camping

Evangelism – New member recruitment and assimilation, outreach, publicity



*Pastor Monroe and Bobbi thank everyone
for your warm Christmas greetings and kindnesses!*

3rd Annual Community Lenten Devotional

The Blairsville Area Ministerium have decided to once again put together a community Lenten devotional. Scripture texts have been distributed to the participating churches and individuals are writing their devotions to share. By the end of January, the devotions should all be submitted and assembly of the booklets will begin. Many copies will be published and they should be made available to you by Sunday, February 14th.

Update on Community Lenten Lunches

Each year the community gathers each Wednesday at 12:00 p.m. during Lent for a worship service followed by a luncheon. Last year the remaining lunches were cancelled in March due to the pandemic. The ministerium is watching the news and will make a decision concerning the 2021 schedule. Information will be available soon.

As We Gather

Because of the nature of this pandemic we understand the responsible caution being taken in returning to in person worship services. The best time for you to return is when you feel healthy and safe in social situations. It is impossible to guarantee safety, but be assured we are doing everything in our power to maintain a clean and safe environment. If you are in the building and notice anything that brings you concern, please let the pastor or church office know so the issue can be addressed.

Opportunities Moving Forward

We are continually in need of volunteers to be trained to run new worship equipment. We are very grateful to those who have stepped up already. Please see Dennis Gould or contact the church office to be a part of this new venture.

Stewardship Works

Your faithful acts of stewardship have been appreciated, especially over the last year. Our expenses continue whether the sanctuary is filled or empty. Because of your generosity we have been able to retain staff, meet bills and assist those in need. We thank you for your faithfulness.



At Home Worship Resources

In the past year, we have tried to send on by email faith building resources to use at home. The Presbyterian Outlook has been faithfully making at home resources available, "Faith Formation at Home" and "Christian Education at Home." The first resource is focused more on family worship. The second is to assist parents in teaching Bible lessons to their children. The Christian Education Committee of our church has also invested in "Children's Bulletins." Each week, along with the "Christian Education at Home" resource, Children's Bulletins are sent via email for the children of our church. They include activities that reinforce the message of that Sunday. If you are interested in receiving either or all of these resources, "Faith Formation at Home" or "Christian Education at Home" and the Children's Bulletins, please contact the church office at 724-459-7991 to be added to the email list. If email is not an option, a paper copy can be mailed to you.

Pastoral Care

Because of health restrictions, visitors have not been permitted to enter hospitals and other care facilities. Clergy have also been advised not to enter personal residences as not to spread any disease unknowingly. If you have any pastoral needs, please contact the minister so some creative solution can be found, 724-459-7991 or 724-459-0131.

Food for Family Thought

1. If you could start your own business tomorrow, what would it be?
**In running a business, you need to stay focused on your basic purpose. Imagine for a moment that raising your child is your "family business." Take a minute to describe the main purpose of this enterprise. What is the most important step you can take today to ensure success?
2. When it comes to things that make you really happy, what 5 things would you rank at the top?
**When asked what it would take to get to heaven, Jesus said, "Feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, and clothe the naked." That's what parents do each day. It's a paradox that our greatest happiness comes when we freely give of ourselves. Think about that the next time you're fixing supper or folding laundry.

Compassion Update

Dear Friends,

Warm greetings to you. How are you doing? My family and I are doing well and thankful to God. We are in rainy season and the crops have sprout. I am getting ready to start school again and I will work hard to succeed. Keep praying for me and my family. May the love and mercy of God be with us.

Thank you,
Samuel

Be Gentle with Those in Your Care

Did you ever wake up feeling confused and out of place?

It's not a feeling that is very nice.

Not knowing where you are or what day it would be.

Struggling with your thoughts...trying to see.

Try to imagine that feeling...never going away.

Trying to find your place every single day.

Trying so hard to remember why

And the only answer you get is a sigh.

Daylight is here and it's not so bad

But then...why oh why are you so sad?

No one around you seems to know

They don't seem to know you have places to go.

If only you could find some face you knew.

Just what would you do if this happens to you?

Step into my shoes for only a day

Perhaps you will know why I run away.

What would you do if you could no longer tie your shoe

And when it's time to dress you don't know what to do?

What if you didn't know when or how to shower

A task so great that perhaps you too would cower.

If I strike out and seem to be mean

Perhaps it is over things that can't be seen.

Step into my shoes for only a day

Maybe then you will see why I act this way.

So please remember as you care for me today

To treat me with kindness and love in every way.

Be patient and tender as you guide me along my way

Step into my shoes for only a day.

This poem was written by Brenda Rice in 1999.

It's based on her personal experiences

in dealing with a mother

who suffered from Alzheimer's.

